# Executive Board Members

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Kip Motta</td>
<td>Rich Middle School</td>
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<td>President Elect</td>
<td>Rod Belnap</td>
<td>Fremont High School</td>
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<td>Past President</td>
<td>Shawn McLeod</td>
<td>South Jordan Middle School</td>
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<td>Kim Baker</td>
<td>Copper Mountain Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large High School Representative</td>
<td>Suzi Jensen</td>
<td>Clearfield High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small High School Representative</td>
<td>Randy Madsen</td>
<td>South Sevier High School</td>
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<td>Large Middle School Representative</td>
<td>Brian Jolley</td>
<td>Pleasant Grove Jr. High</td>
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<td>Small Middle School Representative</td>
<td>Ken Rowley</td>
<td>Juab Middle School</td>
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<td>Assistant Principal Middle School Rep.</td>
<td>Jim Young</td>
<td>Oak Canyon Jr. High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal High School Rep.</td>
<td>Kim Searle</td>
<td>Copper Hills High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Council Representative</td>
<td>Charisse Hilton</td>
<td>Brighton High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialty School Representative</td>
<td>Sharon Jensen</td>
<td>Valley High School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Carl Boyington</td>
<td>UASSP</td>
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<td>Association Secretary</td>
<td>Jane Bradbury</td>
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<td>USOE Liaison</td>
<td>Diana Suddreth</td>
<td>State Office of Education</td>
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Impact Journal

*Impact Journal* is an open-ended theme journal published by the Utah Association of Secondary School Principals (UASSP). Impact is published twice each year.

**Volume 17 Issue 1, MMXVI**
# Table of Contents

**Letter from the Editor**  
Mary Rhodes, EdD ................................................................. 4

**Utah’s Dual Language Immersion Model: a K-12 program with a K-16 vision**  
Jill Landes-Lee and Carolyn Schubach ........................................... 5

**The Ethical Dimensions of Competency-Based Education from an Educational Leadership Perspective**  
J. Edward Frick, Ed.D ............................................................ 8

**Reverent Leadership in our Schools**  
Michael K. Freeman, PhD and Susan A. Turner, PhD .................... 15

**You’d Think We Were Professionals**  
By Bruce Bean ............................................................................... 24

**Four Principal Approaches for Building Teacher Capacity: Working Directly with Teachers, Teams, & Team Leaders**  
David McKay Boren, PhD ........................................................ 27

**Grants for Teachers!**  
Lindsey Baxter ........................................................................... 34

**Elite Educational Leadership**  
Kip Motta .................................................................................. 37

**Leadership Is**  
William “Charlie” Peterson ....................................................... 40

**Students are the Real Experts on School Reform and Improvement**  
Richard P. West, Ph.D., Cade T. Charlton, MBA, & Matthew J. Taylor, Ph.D .................................................... 44
Impact Journal Publication Guidelines

Impact Journal is an open-ended theme journal published by the Utah Association of Secondary School Principals (UASSP). We welcome opinion essays, interviews, program descriptions, research reports, theoretical pieces, school climate pieces, reviews of books, humor, satire, poetry, and cartoons.

Impact is published twice each year to correspond with the UASSP annual winter and summer conferences.

Form

- Impact editors use American Psychological Association (APA) style manual.
- Manuscripts can be sent by e-mail attachment.
- Most of our articles are between 1000 and 3000 words.
- Submit a cover sheet with the manuscript. The cover sheet should include the title, author(s), each author’s present position and school (if applicable), each author’s academic status (if applicable), each author’s mailing address, telephone, and email address.

Submission deadlines are November 15 and April 15 of each year.

Manuscripts will be reviewed as to content and acceptability. Authors should assume that manuscripts will be edited to conform to length and clarity.

Send manuscripts electronically to the editor.

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Letter from the Editor

Mary Rhodes, EdD
Editor

My New Year’s wish to you and resolution for myself is laughter. As simple and professionally suspect as that may sound, complexity and professionalism are inherent in laughter. According to Gregory and Kaufeldt (2015), laughter “relieves tension and stress, raises endorphins, sends oxygenated blood to the brain, boosts the immune system and creates and episodic memorable experience” (p. 53). According to me, laughter is professional survival.

My darling kitten survived 60 to 90 seconds of being spun in the clothes dryer. He screamed loudly, and I opened the door and saved him. Several hours passed before he would let me near him, and a few days passed before I could laugh at his near death. When I finally compared his spin to my professional moments of being tossed into a vortex of screams, vertigo, and survival, I laughed.

Our articles in this edition of Impact throw us into the dizzying state of education, and our challenge is to reflect on our practice, laugh at the immensity of our challenges, and engage in the cognitive complexity of the articles to thrive. Schubach and Landers-Lee describe how Utah has met daunting global needs through our highly successful and unique dual immersion program. The article by Frick and that by Freeman and Turner describe need for new morality in leadership and fulfill that need through carefully constructed and fresh frameworks of ethics.

Bean and Boren, in two articles from the depths of practice, lead us through abrupt and imposed change to enlightened responses. Motta and Peterson, in the next set of articles, use athletic and military metaphors to move us from mundane practice to excellence. The closing article by West, Charlton, and Taylor provides statistics on poverty, proficiency, and public education that are frightening, and then open the door on possible solutions. Cover photography by Robert King demonstrates the crisis of water and the solution. Brent Sumner solves the crises of time by printing and delivering, and the ever-creative photography Dave Tanner captures our conferences and epitomizes the theme of the laughter.

I am grateful cats have loud screams, nine lives, and ability to land on their feet. I am so proud to be in a group of professionals that can face the closed doors, centrifugal spins, and high heat and react with screams and alacrity and laughter.

Reference
Seven years ago, Senate Bill 41 kicked off the state-wide Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program in Utah. Currently 22 districts and four charter schools house DLI programs, impacting over 28,000 students. This year, the secondary DLI continuation has hit our middle and junior high schools, with 27 sites across the state.

SB 41 specified that elementary programs must begin in kindergarten or grade 1, have a two-teacher model (Target Language teacher and partner English teacher), and maintain 50% of instructional time in each language. Students learn Utah Core subjects in both languages. One hundred and eleven Dual Language Immersion elementary programs now exist throughout the state, representing five languages: Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish, Portuguese and German. The goals of the program are academic achievement, bilingualism/biliteracy, and cultural competency, all of which prepare students to compete in a global workforce.

While Utah’s DLI program was developed based on research and best practices across the nation and around the world, Utah is unique in that we have a K-12 course sequencing with a K-16 vision, as well as a model focused on both academic achievement and language proficiency outcomes. Additionally, Utah stands out because of its state-wide infrastructure and support, including program fidelity assurances, curriculum materials, instructional maps, and professional development.

DLI and Student Achievement
The University of Utah Education Policy Center conducted research comparing the academic outcomes of DLI and non-DLI students according to third grade ELA and math CRT results from 2012-13. The results of this study indicate that, “on average, DLI students had higher ELA and math CRT scores and were less likely to be chronically absent than non-DLI students.” We will continue to evaluate the data on academic achievement.
For more information on this study, go to: http://l2trec.utah.edu/immersion2014/_documents/Swenson-WTharplmm2014.pdf

Secondary DLI Continuation, grades 7-12

Students in this year’s seventh grade DLI Continuation courses begin an academic pathway focused on critical thinking, analysis, and academic speaking and writing skills that will ready them for university study and use of the language in their professional life. Courses are designed to challenge students with authentic and culturally significant texts published for native speakers. Students are asked to grapple with real world, complex issues centered on interdisciplinary themes, essential questions of inquiry, and cultural understanding.

Districts following the Utah DLI model offer the DLI 3 Honors course in seventh grade and DLI 4 Honors in eighth grade, along with the partner course, Culture and Media. All courses are taught 100% in the target language. Course themes, language objectives, and pre-AP tasks lead intentionally towards the AP Language and Culture course in grade 9.

University Bridge Courses

Through a unique partnership between Utah’s institutions of higher education and the USOE, students who pass the AP Language and Culture exam will be eligible to take upper division (3000 level) university language courses in the high school setting.

Bridge Courses are taught by university faculty, who partner with a qualified high school language teacher to deliver instruction. Students have the opportunity to take one Bridge Course each year for three university credits per course, positioning them to graduate from high school with up to nine upper division credits (two or three courses shy of a minor in their language of study).

The DLI Bridge Project is comprised...
forward to seeing the accomplishments and unique pathways that biliteracy will provide for our students. The K-16 vision seeks to open doors for career and university study that partner the language with various fields. Our students will graduate from high school ready to reach across cultures and languages, combining career passions with language ability: engineering with German, business with Chinese, medicine with Spanish or French.

The implications for our students in a global society are profound. The DLI program is a “general ed” program, serving students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As such, it positions all students in the program to enter the global workforce with skills leading to success in careers, diplomacy, and leadership in this twenty-first century.

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Carolyn Schubach is Utah Dual Language Immersion Administrators Program Director. She can be contacted at carolyn.schubach@gmail.com
Introduction
Competency-based educational models have been at the forefront of educational discussion in recent years. In general terms, competency-based education is a model that meets students where they are academically, provides students with opportunities for choice, and awards credit for evidence of mastery rather than the amount of time spent studying a subject or in a classroom (Steele et al., 2014). With the advent of technological advances, this model, which emphasizes individualized instruction, has become more feasible from an educational organization standpoint and more desirable from a student standpoint (Steele et al., 2014).

As competency-based education continues to expand, policymakers and educational leaders must consider whether or not such a model embodies the moral underpinnings of education. One can argue that the moral underpinning is evident in the success of students engaged within such a model at both the secondary and higher education levels (Klein-Collins, 2013). This article explores this idea based upon an examination of how competency-based education embodies the ethics of care, community, and connectedness through its implementation.

Considering Three Normative Ethical Frameworks in Education
Moral philosophy provides a backdrop to situate and better understand the distinct theoretical perspectives of ethical and moral leadership within educational administration. There are primarily six ethical themes or standpoints considered in the field of educational leadership. These moral perspectives (typically articulated as theories of duty)—guidance for individual ethical decision-making, expressions of relational morality, or guidance for establishing moral school environments, comprise the basis from which much of the empirical literature exists (Frick & Frick, 2010). A separate consideration of three of the theoretical standpoints (care, community, and connectedness) is important because it informs the central theme of how competency-based education embodies such ethical paradigms in practice.

Care
A care perspective, or what has been referred to in the literature and practice...
within the profession as an ‘ethic of care’, is clearly expressed in the work of Noddings (1988), Beck (1994) and Gilligan (1982). Interpersonal in nature, this moral perspective focuses on the demands of relationship from a position of unconditional positive regard, or described elsewhere as a deep awareness of ‘the other’ as persons in community with ourselves as subjects. This position asserts that as human beings (and females in particular, perhaps), we have the capacity to feel deep respect or love for other people and especially people different from ourselves. Our attitudes toward others “re determined in part by an understanding of who and what they are: In this case, that they are human beings, persons, and that as persons they possess an inner integrity, a self-determination, a capacity for free and spiritual activity that we also sense in ourselves” (Gilkey, 1993). This level of empathy and self-understanding applied to the other can become the foundation for treating persons as ends and not as means, and can, in large part, provide the inner basis of an outward social order. To be in relationships with others where care, nurturance, respect, compassion and trust are the dominant characteristics is to be fully human. The integrity of human relationship and connection is paramount for this perspective; and consideration of rights, principles and laws are secondary to the primacy of beneficence for seeking resolution of moral issues. Acts, dispositions and thinking that are conducive to the well-being of others and a ‘commitment to receptive attention and a willingness to respond helpfully to legitimate needs’ is the bedrock of moral striving (Noddings, 1996, p. 265). Rather than restricting the moral domain to considerations of duty and obligation, an ethic of care asks a more foundational question of how we should live. Care theory ‘is relation-centered rather than agent-centered, and it is more concerned with the caring relation than with caring as a virtue’ (Noddings, 2002, p. 2). Both relationship and virtue are acknowledged, but relationship is primary and ‘credits the cared-for with a special contribution, one different from reciprocal response as carer’ (Noddings, 2002: 2). The cared-for contribute significantly to relational morality, and ‘social’ virtues are defined situationally within the space of personal interaction.

Close relationships are a central feature of the moral life and constitute another aspect of community that lends an additional vantage to our understanding of practical ethics. Although a focus on the dyadic relationship of care provides insights into the ‘I–Thou’ existential experience of humanity as a legitimate ‘voice’ of mutual encounter with the other as a person possessing inner integrity, there appears to be more to the moral story. The emphasis on relation with the singular other can disrupt and warp a ‘thoroughgoing consideration of care’ (Noddings, 1993, p. 48) where one’s entire web of relations, both as the carer and the cared-for, are robustly considered.

Community
A community perspective, or what has been referred to in the literature and practice within the profession as an ‘ethic of community’, is clearly expressed in the work of Furman (2003a, 2003b, 2004)
and Bellah et al. (1985). According to this viewpoint, moral choices are best made in communitarian settings rather than a traditional focus on the experiences internal to an individual agent. Moving away from the Western notion of individual as leader and moral agent, community-building and communities of practice are emphasized. Community is not defined as an entity but rather an ongoing set of processes that include communication, dialog and collaboration. This position purports that being ethical and acting ethically cannot be achieved without commitment to the collective and to the constructive methods of communal process. The community rather than the individual person is the moral agent, and educational leaders are obliged to practice and also engender communal processual skills in others taking part in the work of schools. The term ‘processual’ is unusual, likely because it is a shift in ontological perspective regarding community. Community, within this tradition, is not necessarily a thing, a tangible entity,” but rather a ‘sense’ achieved by ”ongoing processes of communication, dialogue, and collaboration and not on a set of discrete indicators such as ‘shared values’” (Furman, 2002, p. 285). Community is not viewed as a measured product or entity, but rather a continuous, ongoing process where moral weight is given to promoting commitment to interpersonal exchange over an end product or something tangible.

A commitment to the processes of community, continuous and recursive, that focuses on interpersonal and group awareness, respectful listening, empathetic knowing and understanding of others, effective communication, partnering and working together, supporting and encouraging dialog in open and equal forums, is the foundational value to be internalized and acted upon. The practice of community is prior to and fundamental to the moral aims and purposes of schooling which include social justice, enactment of democracy, and learning for all children.

A communitarian understanding of our collective life together provides a powerful insight about the moral life. What is ethical is not so much what the individual person does in relationship to others, but how the collective responds to environmental and to membership needs where Western notions of atomistic individualism, celebrated autonomy, and Hobbesian self-interest give way to moral considerations consisting of egalitarian sentiments, the deep-seated human drive toward living in community, and our collective attunement to one another through an awareness of our common humanity (Frick & Frick, 2010).

**Connectedness**

A connectedness perspective emerges from the work of Robert Blum of John Hopkins University, who spearheaded the work of an interdisciplinary group of education and health leaders convened to examine specific steps for improving connections with students (Blum, 2005). Other groups included in this process were the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Adolescent School Health, The Johnson Foundation and the Center for Adolescent Health and Development at the University of Minnesota. From this work a clear definition of school connection was offered, and insights and strategies were presented that
would increase the likelihood of connectedness within a school context.

According to Blum and Libbey (2004), school connection is the belief by students that adults in school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. The critical elements needed for students to experience this level of connectedness include:

1. High academic expectations and rigor coupled with support for learning
2. Positive adult-student relationships
3. Safety, both physical and emotional.

If developed within a school setting, connectedness would positively impact a variety of accountability measures such as academic performance, absenteeism, school completion rates and severe discipline infractions (Goodenow, 1993). Croninger and Lee (2001) demonstrate that increased student connection leads to enhanced educational motivation, stronger classroom engagement; and improved school attendance, and thereby to an increase in academic achievement.

It is clear from the aforementioned findings and from our own moral intuition and practical sense-making that school connectedness needs to be a priority for school leaders in any context. The question is how educational institutions can encourage this ethic.

A study panel from the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2004) provided educators with six strategies that would increase connectedness within an educational setting:

1. Implementing high standards and expectations while providing academic support to all students
2. Applying fair and consistent disciplinary policies that are collectively agreed upon and fairly enforced
3. Creating trusting relationships among students, teachers, staff, administrators and families
4. Hiring and supporting capable faculty skilled in their respective disciplines, teaching techniques, and classroom management to meet each learner's needs while bringing relevancy to content
5. Fostering high family expectations for academic performance and school completion
6. Ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult while engaged in the educational process.

These suggestions are reinforced in a practical sense by Wolk (2007) when he states:

Passive schooling creates passive people. If we want people to think, learn, and care about the many dimensions of life, if we want neighbors who accept the responsibility of tending to the world and working to make it a better place, then we need school and curricula that are actually about life and the world ... either we make our schools into vibrant workshops for personal, social, and global transformation, or we must own up to our complicity in perpetuating a superficial, unthinking, and unjust world (p. 650).

Ethics in Practice

Although the aforementioned ethics appear in health and educational research and analyses, the underlying premise remains consistent; community, welfare, and caring are essential to progress. This progress can and must be forged at different levels —
globally, internationally, culturally, institutionally and locally — and education plays a crucial role. In serving the best interests of students, educational institutions must therefore embrace and engrain within their cultures these ethical principles — care, community, and connectedness. The following will briefly outline two documented examples of competency-based educational models and how they reflect care, community, and connectedness within implementation and practice.

**Contexts**

Sanborn Regional School District in New Hampshire switched to a competency-based model after years of poor performance on state assessments. Sanford Regional High School, which serves 754 students in ninth through twelfth grade, saw a significant drop in discipline issues after the state moved to a competency-based system in 2005; the number of freshmen reported for discipline issues fell from 433 during the 2007–2008 school year to just 84 in 2011–2012. Course failures among the freshman class dropped from 53 students to just two students during the same time frame. Additionally, the New Hampshire Department of Education efforts to support policies that encourage competency-based learning and utilize different approaches to professional development spurred substantial innovation across the state. This was evident in local high school redesign initiatives that yielded positive results at specific sites and further demonstrated that a competency-based model is possible and can produce increased student learning and graduation rates (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2013: 4).

On the other side of the country, the Chugach School District in Alaska transitioned to a competency-based model due to both poor academic performance and community demands for qualified graduates. Within the first five years of the implementation of the model, Chugach moved from the bottom quartile to an average 72nd percentile on Alaska’s required state assessments. The Chugach School District competency-based education system was honored by President Bush as the first education organization to earn the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and again by Alaska’s own quality award program by being the first recipient of the APEX award (Crumley, 2014).

In both of the above district examples, an ethic of care, community, and connectedness is evident within the model utilized. Each district recognized and empathized with the academic and social issues facing students that there was a need to make a change and then acted upon it. This recognition and empathy, coupled with action, are at the heart of the ethic of care.

Along with the awareness and initial action, both districts made substantial efforts to engage the community in both examining competencies as well as providing authentic learning experiences for students beyond the context of the school. These efforts embodied the communication, dialog, and collaboration with stakeholders and are indicative of an ethic of community.

While both an ethic of care and community are addressed in the provided examples, perhaps one of the most crucial ethics illustrated in the examples is that of connectedness. Both districts made efforts to directly engage students
in the creation of individualized learning plans. Students learn at their appropriate developmental pace, creating interest-based relevant individual learning plans and projects that help each individual master academic skills. This level of engagement requires deep connection and awareness of the student from an academic and social perspective.

Summary

The outlined assertions regarding competency-based education rests with the claims of others within educational leadership. Rudy Crew (2007), former superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (the fourth largest school system in the USA), in his book, *Only Connect, The Way to Save Our Schools*, argues for, among many things, the nuanced thought required to bridge gaps, create consensus and find equitable solutions to pressing educational issues. Schools can and should and will connect us as persons, communities, and cultures if we can get morally smart. This premise of competency-based education is expressed eloquently by Wagner (2001), who provides a practical theory of action for school leaders for positive change. Collaborative relationships among adults are the key to the dilemma of school reinvention. For leaders, it is not about ‘selling’ an idea, program or reform model by ‘getting buy-in’ but rather about engendering ownership and commitment for improved student outcomes. Collective ownership and commitment goes to the level of moral purpose, and the ‘biggest challenge for educational leaders is to nurture engagement and commitment rooted in community’ (Wagner, 2001, p. 385).

In the end, this is the most significant advantage of competency-based education models and why they truly embody the underlying moral obligation to serve the best interests of students.

References


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Our schools need great instructional leaders who understand the importance of building and articulating a vision, inspire people to do their best work, set priorities and maintain standards for excellence, do the right things for the right reasons in the right way, and understand the instructional processes of a school.

**Leadership: What is it?**

We can find nearly many definitions for leadership, so much so that we sometimes struggle to separate leadership from its sister, management. Leadership is related to the classical concept of management, but in practice and in results, it is something very different. Kotter (1999) defined leadership as “…the development of vision and strategies, the alignment of relevant people behind those strategies, and the empowerment of individuals to make vision happen, despite obstacles.” He writes; “This stands in sharp contrast with management, which involves keeping the current system operating through planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling and problem-solving. Leadership works through people and culture. It is soft and hot. Management works through hierarchy and systems. It’s harder and cooler” (Kotter, 1999, pg.10).

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) suggest that “great managers look inward” at the motivation, skills, needs and style of each individual in the organization to ensure that their performance is maximized. Great leaders also “look outward” at the environment in which the organization operates. They must be visionary and futuristic.

Leadership is tougher to describe than leaders. What makes us want to follow a person in a leadership role? What do we see that inspires and builds confidence and capacity?

Northouse (2012) writes: “Everyone, at some time in life is asked to be a leader… A leader may have a high profile or a low profile, but in every situation there are leadership demands placed on the individual who is the leader.” Is leadership a trait or distinguishing characteristic belonging to an individual? Is it ability or skill? Is it a behavior or a relationship? Is it a process? The answer is YES. It is all of these (Northouse, 2012).

This article is not about management, but focuses on building an approach to leadership appropriate for school settings. While it includes many of the elements...
found in the traditional leadership models, it is focused and built on respect for and empowerment of the people in the organization, including students, faculty and staff. We have chosen to describe this using the term: Reverent Leadership.

A new approach built around the concept of reverence seems an appropriate evolution. Educators have often expressed a sense of being ‘called’ to the teaching profession. Fullan (2003) suggests that education is more than a profession or occupation, but that it includes a moral, even a spiritual connection between students, faculty and administrators.

The use of the term reverence in speaking of educational leadership is grounded in the nobility of education as a discipline, as a livelihood and a lifelong pursuit. It connotes respect for the critical importance of education to society and to individual students. Bolman and Deal (2013) eloquently suggest that educational leaders undertake a spiritual journey that begins with themselves and inspires others. This spiritual nature of education forms the basis for Reverent Leadership. Many organizational leaders struggle to find a balance between the need to get the job done and the need to build and strengthen relationships among faculty staff and others in the organization. Reverent Leadership represents a balance between these two ideals.

**Research Methodology Underlying Reverent Leadership**

While the model has not undergone rigorous validation procedures, it presents a series of ideas drawn from our experience and supported by a broad search of literature on leadership in organizations. It emphasizes the spiritual nature of education as an endeavor and an organization. This study was conducted within a qualitative self-study methodology. As practicing administrators, teachers of graduate studies in educational leadership, and scholars in the field, we observed trends and themes in both scholarship and practice. Our literature base and the lived experiences (Creswell, 2002) of our students suggested the need for a leadership model that demonstrates reverence for the relationships between and among the various members of the educational organization (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Sources of Self-Study Data](image-url)

Figure 1: Sources of Self-Study Data

Figure 1 displays the data sources that contributed to the study. In the qualitative research tradition, the literature review provides context throughout the study in order to assist in organizing the data into a series of emergent trends and themes (Creswell, 2002). As we organized data from our experiences and those of our students, a series of themes began to take shape, and the reverent leadership model began to emerge. Reverent Leadership

The Reverent Leadership model was developed as a lens to view the primary leadership responsibility of relation-
ship building. Because the spiritual nature of educational settings differs from that often found in business settings, the interpersonal relationships that exist in educational institutions also differ in significant ways.

Educational leaders are responsible for motivating and communicating with a wide variety of constituencies. They must be able to create and maintain a positive, nurturing organizational culture. Relationship-building in educational institutions requires a highly-humanistic and artistic lens through which to view individuals within those institutions.

By definition, the word reverence means to hold respect, admiration, and even astonishment and awe (Microsoft Word Thesaurus, 2010) for others. The ‘Reverent’ descriptor emphasizes the importance of an altruistic, even a spiritual view, of each individual within a leader’s sphere of responsibility. Leaders who rever those they lead, consider their past, present, and future needs, and move beyond simply being ethical, to a position of trust granted by the community. In addition to meeting institutional goals, educational leaders assume responsibility for the welfare and professional futures of all within the organization.

Reverent Leadership assumes an ongoing growth and learning cycle. It is leadership that respects each individual in the school, and recognizes and assumes individual and group strength, and; then works with the group making positive change (Turner 2007). Reverent Leadership is leadership based on relationships, actualization, and respect between the leader, the organization, and the people within it. It also connotes reverence for the profession and its place in society.

Reverent Leadership draws from the literature six elements or lenses through which leadership can be viewed (see Figure 2)

Figure 2: Six Elements of Reverent Leadership

Vision

“Vision is choosing a direction for an organization, the creation of a mental image that can be used by each member within it to guide their own behavior. Vision allows leaders to “…communicate their ideas in a powerful way to the group, directing all resources - human and otherwise - toward the achievement of that vision” (Turner, 1998, p. 141). Its inclusive nature addresses the importance of and encourages the development of common goals within the organization.

Bolman and Deal (2013) define vision as a persuasive and hopeful image of the future that addresses both the challenges of the present and hopes and values of the future. Ramsey (2006) defines a leader as someone who puts vision into words and words in to action, creating a mental picture of what the organization should look like.
like and through which opportunities and challenges can be filtered (Ramsey, 2006, p 19). Northouse (2012) likewise indicates that creating a vision takes a special kind of cognitive and conceptual ability, including the capacity to challenge people with a compelling view of the future.

The process of helping a group create a common vision lies at the heart of effective leadership. Leaders may potentially include everyone in the organization... both formal and informal leaders... not just those designated or appointed. Though a leader can provide opportunities for a group to interact and set the task of creating a vision, the actual vision is a combination of each individual’s understanding, motivation, resources, and willingness to implement that vision. In order for the vision to influence the direction of the organization, it must represent a common view shared across all members and stakeholders, including both goals and plans. A compelling vision statement, to which all members of the organization have contributed, can be a powerful motivating influence.

A truly effective vision is accompanied by goals, objectives, and plans for implementation. The real challenge in strategic planning is not just in creating the vision, but also in a strong implementation plan. A leader must provide a living example, including the ability to provide feedback and rewards as individuals and groups accomplish the vision. An Effective leaders will exemplify the vision in their work.

Community

The term community as used in education settings exemplifies the larger social and societal context for the school, including all who have an interest in its success. Glickman (2007) defines a school as “a community of leaders, teachers and learners with individual members assuming all three roles,” (p. 454). Glickman further suggests that the term community can itself be a moral principle if it reflects a commitment to the overall well-being, growth and development of each member. This commitment leads to common values, norms, relationships and practices that are consistent within the community (Glickman 2007).

Zalzenik (1989) suggests that the critical understanding of and agreement to a moral compact or common set of ethical standards that everyone is willing and able to exemplify, is the first part of creating a workable community. This setting of ground rules is an important element of community. Once the ground rules are set, individuals within an organization can live and work in an environment that exemplifies those qualities. The moral compact of Reverent Leadership must include elements of respect and trust between all members of the organization and the recognition of the critical nature of the relationship between schools and society. It also requires honesty, transparency, and clear communication, and recognition of the value of dignity and respect for each member of the organization.

Sergiovanni (1994) discusses the importance of connecting people with the organizational purpose. This bonding is stronger when shared values and ideals lie at the center of the organizational community. In this way, communities are governed internally by the emergence of group norms rather than by external forces. As Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest, organizations exist to serve human needs, not the other way around.

“We connect because we need the
knowledge and resources others possess to be successful. These human connections result in a synergetic experience -- causing unpredictable events and enhancing both the people and the organization. True connection is a very real and very human entity. It cannot be assigned or forced and the connections between individuals and groups cannot be predicted. This is one of the beauties and dangers of connection.” (Turner, 1998, p. 277).

**Group Learning**

Incorporating the power of group wisdom and on-going group learning into an organization is an important focus of Reverent Leadership. Surowiecki (2004) suggests that large groups of interested constituents can often make better decisions than individual experts. Surowiecki indicates that not all crowds are wise, but groups with certain characteristics often prove to possess great wisdom. His criteria for the creation of a wise group include:

**Diversity of Opinion**

Each person should have private information even if it’s just an eccentric interpretation of the known facts.

**Independence**

People’s opinions aren’t determined by the opinions of those around them.

**Decentralization**

People are able to specialize and draw on local knowledge.

**Aggregation**

Some mechanism exists for turning private judgments into a collective decision.

The understanding of group learning is powerful but not new (Argyris, 1974; Senge, 1990). Within the last decade, Professional Learning Communities (Matthews & Crow, 2010) have been recognized as powerful ways of generating change within schools and other organizations. Change can take place within an organization or because a learning organization crosses the boundaries of the organization. Senge (2008) wrote, “… start a network of effective organizers and get the involvement of the key companies in the region, and some of the governments, and then things can really start to happen.” (p. 74).

The notion of beginning with an idea, then incorporating a wider and wider circle of influence is powerful. Learning organizations don’t need to stay within the walls of a building. Social and professional organizations and the internet are coming together in to create surprising waves of change.

**Structure**

Bolman and Deal (2013) suggest that while the potential organizational structures or social architectures may be almost limitless, they must address two critical questions: a) how are responsibilities allocated across units and people; and b) how are diverse efforts integrated to pursue common goals? Organizational structure is about putting people in the right roles and relationships. Bolman and Deal (2013, p. 45) provide six structural assumptions:

Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives.

Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.

Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse of individuals and units mesh.

Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.

Structures must be designed to fit an or-
ganization’s current circumstances (including its goals, technology, workforce, and environment). Problems arise and performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring. Consistent with Bolman and Deal’s work, Mintzberg (1979) indicated, that organizations are “pictures of a system of flows of information and lines of communication”. He suggested that organizations could be best understood with a graphic visualization, illustrating people inside the organization playing specific roles, and people outside the organization ‘influencing’ actions within and outside the organization as coalitions. “Hierarchical status is not the only factor of significance,” (1979, pp. 38 - 39).

Global View
Education has experienced a myriad of changes during the past few generations. These changes have been rooted in the changing needs demands and expectations of society. Leadership demands currency with these demands and an understanding of the place of our schools and organizations within the larger social, political and community environments(Turner, 2007).

The concept of ‘zeitgeist’ – a specific cultural view at a given time and place – (Forsyth, 2009) is a strong force in shaping leadership theory and organizational behavior. As leaders continue to lead schools in a global and changing social, political and legal environment, it is important to examine how paradigms are shaped by current ideas, beliefs and accepted theories, and to understand that the paradigms are constantly evolving and changing.

Leaders who effectively manage change, both by anticipating and preparing, find themselves at a distinct advantage. Leaders must transcend old ideas or worn-out concepts and recognize that their beliefs, views, and culture must be fluid and vibrant. The nature of knowledge development is that current understandings will continue to evolve and change, and, leading with an eye on what is current, on the small signs of future directions, and on understandings appearing on the horizon is critical.

Drucker (2002) suggested that leaders of the future wouldn’t be able to lead by charisma alone. They will need to think through the fundamentals to help others work productively. This will be quite demanding considering the speed of change, the expectations of people and organizations, and an increasingly competitive world economy.

Underlying Order
An important role of leaders is to help organizations develop in a healthy, expansive way with attention to where they are on an acceleration/deceleration organizational cycle. When organizations sense that they are being pushed toward change, their understanding of the environmental issues they are facing help leaders to change strategy or gracefully let go of current initiatives, and move forward, even if it appears to be a step backward (Turner, 2007). This reminds us that organizations rise and fall, projects are funded and flourish before decline, and there is a somewhat predictable, systematic pattern of organizational ‘flow’ that can be traced over time.

This is not to suggest that all
organizations fail, but rather provides the understanding that organizations and organizational cultures are either in an expansion or a contracting pattern, and that they are often embroiled in a process of ongoing change. Wise leaders understand where the organization is and have an ability to see the changes that must be made in order to avoid this deceleration. They notice, change strategy, and adjust to changes in the environment. They anticipate environmental change and move organization toward an ongoing expansive mode.

This is often the place where inattentive leaders take heroic action to maintain an ineffective organizational culture when the environment is pushing it in the opposite direction (Turner, 2007). This is a delicate decision because organizations can make adjustments that continue to keep them alive often for long periods, but such adjustments, absent true organizational change, simply delay the inevitable.

Reverent Leadership: A State of Being

Of course, there are no magic potions to becoming a Reverant Leader, but this approach, grounded both in experience and research may be useful. Reverent leadership requires one to remain in a calm but generative state to facilitate group processes and provide order to the organization. It requires leaders to develop their skills, competencies, and attitudes in order to provide competent and capable leadership for others. It notes various relationships that exist in the organization and recognizes how those relationships lead towards a productive organization built around self-development and self-understanding at both the individual and organizational levels.

Attention to each of six elements addressed here can provide the leader with understanding and the freedom to focus efforts on these relationships. Key to the development of the Reverent Leader is the understanding of the relationships found in the school organization. Figure 3 provides a graphic display of types of relationships often found in the school.

Figure 3: Relevant Relationships in Reverent Leadership

Summary and Conclusion

Reverent Leadership, by definition is a binding of theories and frameworks about leadership. It combines the attitude of Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), the fiery enthusiasm of Transformational Leadership (Mezirow, 2000), the moral compass of Ethical Leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006), and the authenticity and transparency of Authentic Leadership (AntonakisBrolio, Sivasubramaniam, (2003; Bennis, (2003; Luthens, & Avolio, (2003; WalumbaO., Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, (February 2008).

Reverent Leadership is based on a holistic view of the organization, the environment within which it operates, the people and resources at its disposal, and most important, a respect for each of these elements. This respect is not con-
fined simply to the relationship between the leader and the people in the organization, but includes respect for the organization itself, its purposes for existence, its contribution to society, and its place within the greater environment.

This article strays from the field of education, drawing perspective from the literature on business and management. The field of education is unique in many ways, but also consists of organizations (schools) with a distinct place in the fiber of society. Schools are a public trust, with important roles in society and with the opportunity and responsibility to shape the future of that society. Effective leaders in education have an even greater responsibility to apply **Reverent Leadership** in fulfilling that role.

**References**


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We all know that in education change is a constant; the key is how we handle change and whether we embrace the opportunities that can come with change.

It was about the second or third day of the 2014 school year, and I was standing in the hall, viewing the students passing by and thinking about what we had accomplished already, in a large season of change. A long time teacher came up and stood by me, and we talked for a moment. I mentioned to him that things seemed to be going pretty well, considering all the changes we had to make before the opening of school. The teacher stood there for a moment.

“Yeah, you’d think we were professionals,” he said and walked away.

It was an Aha moment for me. It opened my eyes to what we had accomplished already, in a large season of change. A long time teacher came up and stood by me, and we talked for a moment. I mentioned to him that things seemed to be going pretty well, considering all the changes we had to make before the opening of school. The teacher stood there for a moment.

The 2014-15 school year was full of large changes at Carbon High School. Some had begun years before, others had just come up in the last school year. That year we faced challenges including:

• We had decided to go from a four period day to a five.
• We had an enrollment increase in the high school of over 300 students, with 900 new students total.
• We, for the first time ever, had become a school with freshman in the building.
• Our superintendent decided that since the junior highs (now middle schools) had gone to one-to-one, electronic devices we should too.
• We were just getting started implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
• On top of everything else, we were facing accreditation.

After years of teaching, and a number of years being an assistant principal and a principal, I realized when all this took place that change is inevitable. Change is going to happen whether it is planned or unplanned. Planned change is better, so we faced our demons head on.

I also realized that day that nothing would have gone the way it should if only a few of us had been involved. Our faculty had stood up and faced the facts. My great staff pulled together, putting in long hours, much of that time not on the clock. While I inherently knew the power of the staff all along, we let the teachers make decisions, and it demonstrated that we do have a great staff right here in rural Utah.

The impetus for many of the changes came from the fact that our school was in bad shape when it came to educating kids about mathematics. Just about the entire district had low scores. We were on a 4 by 4 schedule, with 87 minute...
Along with this, and in coordination with it, we began using the PLC models we had seen.

periods, that was put in place in 1985. At the time we decided to make the schedule change, I was an assistant principal, but together we knew something needed to be done. Students were only getting math instruction once every other day, and it needed to be every day for us to raise our achievement level.

We started looking at different schedules. We found some that weren’t that much different from what we were doing, but upon visiting Rick Robbins at Juab School District, we looked at their 5 by 5 schedule and found it to fit our needs the best. We saw that it was flexible in that it could emphasize periods where we could work on the things that we needed to improve upon, and it also gave us time with students to pursue interventions when they are needed.

The faculty knew this change needed to happen. It increased our instruction time on math and since then, while we have not yet met the state average in SAGE math scores, we have shown vast improvements in the last two years. At some point the averages and above average achievement in growth will cross paths.

Then in August of 2014, only a few weeks before the beginning of school, it was decided that the entire student body would be getting Chromebooks. The incoming freshmen were familiar with the use of the devices, because they had been using them as eighth graders in the junior high model, where they were initially introduced to the district. This meant more big changes, not only for students, but for everyone. Teachers, who had already faced so many changes and had met those challenges, were now faced with learning how to use an entirely new system for giving out class assignments, for evaluating students, and for staying connected with them.

The changes were enough to send any school staff into overload. Staff learned to develop lessons and assessments using technology and to communicate with students in exciting ways. The faculty responded well and carried the loads they needed to get things done smoothly and efficiently.

This meant huge changes, both for the administration and for the teaching corp. New bodies from a different grade entirely meant more classes, which the teaching staff remained much the same. More importantly, there was a drastic revamp of teaching plans to accommodate the new students.

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Then that spring we faced accreditation. We had been working on preparing for our accreditation visit for over a year. By the way, the new AdvancED accreditation is certainly much better and more informative than the prior Northwest Accreditation that Utah had been using. We welcomed the review and the opportunity it presented. However, we had so much on our plates we just basically just asked the review team to come in and see us for what we are… a very caring, talented, and hardworking staff. The onsite review went well. The AdvancEd Review Team commended Carbon for what we had accomplished in such a short time with the changes and affirmed to us that certainly we are professionals and should be proud of what we do and what we accomplish as educators.

It was a year of change, but our faculty handled this with amazing professionalism. We continue to handle the new programs as we work through the present academic year. It took hard work, planning, coordination and most of all dedication by all involved to achieve what we did.

**We truly are professionals by any measure.**
With so much to do and so little time, principals must be able to identify and implement the most *vital behaviors* with the greatest impact on learning (Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2013). Abundant research points to the fact that classroom teachers have a greater impact on student learning than any other in-school factor, with principals having the next greatest impact (Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Ahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). It logically follows then that “the best way [for principals] to improve student learning is to invest in the learning of the adults who serve them” (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008, p. 19). Thus, a vital behavior for principals is to ensure high levels of learning for all teachers, which will then result in higher levels of student learning. There are many different approaches principals can take to build teacher capacity. Some approaches are *good*, some are *better*, and some are *best* (Oaks, 2007). My purpose in this article is to review some good, better, best, and very best approaches that principals can take to increase the capacity of our teachers so that they can better help students learn. These approaches involve:

- Building teacher capacity through observations and coaching
- Building teacher capacity by building team capacity
- Building teacher capacity by building team leader capacity
- Building teacher capacity by using all three approaches

Discussion of each can lead to understanding of the power of all.

**A Good Approach: Building Teacher Capacity through Observations and Coaching**

In this approach principals seek to directly improve instruction through one-on-one teacher observations and coaching. School leaders spend time in classrooms ensuring that teachers’ instructional practices match researched best practices of teaching. Ideally, when gaps exist between observed and ideal teaching practices, the principal then provides training, coaching, support, and other resources to help individual teachers improve. If the principal notices
that several teachers in the school have similar instructional needs, schoolwide professional development is then tailored to that need. Ultimately, this approach assumes that as principals help teachers to improve their quality of instruction, student learning will naturally improve as well (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**

**Good Approach: Principal Building Teacher Capacity by Working Directly with Teacher**

Principal → Teacher → Student

This approach most closely aligns with traditional models of clinical supervision, instructional leadership, and developmental coaching (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2013), and in the past has been many principals’ primary approach. As a new principal, this was my default approach for improving teaching and learning.

First, this approach dangerously assumes that principals have the necessary time to provide consistent, ongoing coaching to teachers. “With the overwhelming number of responsibilities school leaders must attend to every day, how is this possible?” (Marshall, 2013, p. 27). Of this approach Fullan explained: “The entire premise is individualistic. There is nothing in the strategy about developing the group. It’s as if the system has unlimited supervisory capacity and that principals have all the time in the world to change teachers one at a time” (2014, p. 46).

While many principals truly enjoy the deep discussions about instruction that result from this approach, there is often little or no mention about how the observed instruction actually impacted student learning. Principals and teachers engaged in this approach sometimes forget to ask the critical questions: “Are we here to teach, or are we here to ensure that our students learn” (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2012, p. 17)? As a result, a teacher displaying all of the outlined best-practice behaviors may be deemed highly effective and still have many students learning at low levels. DuFour and Mattos warn, “Classroom observations can be meaningful and beneficial to some done correctly, may lead to improved teaching. One reason many of us choose this approach is that we were solid classroom teachers and have a lot of expertise to offer in this area. It can be gratifying to delve into rich reflections about instructional practices and see an individual teacher make substantive instructional improvements based on our direct work with that teacher.

As a new principal, I soon recognized some very real challenges that came with this approach. First, this approach dangerously assumes that principals have the necessary time to provide consistent, ongoing coaching to teachers. “With the overwhelming number of responsibilities school leaders must attend to every day, how is this possible?” (Marshall, 2013, p. 27). Of this approach Fullan explained: “The entire premise is individualistic. There is nothing in the strategy about developing the group. It’s as if the system has unlimited supervisory capacity and that principals have all the time in the world to change teachers one at a time” (2014, p. 46).

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While I had foolishly chalked up my teachers’ lack of effective collaboration to their intentional resistance, in reality they simply didn’t know how to effectively collaborate.

As a new school leader I knew I could not totally abandon this good approach, but I knew there was must be other better approaches that might enhance my efforts to build teacher capacity. That led me to a better approach.

A Better Approach: Building Teacher Capacity by Building Team Capacity

The second approach I tried was to build the capacity of my teachers to work on teams within a professional learning community. In this approach principals seek to indirectly improve teacher learning by increasing the capacity of teachers to work on a collaborative team (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Better Approach: Principal Building Teacher Capacity by Working Directly with Teacher Teams.

DuFour and Marzano claim: “Time devoted to building the capacity of teachers to work in teams is far better spent than time devoted to observing individual teachers” (2011, p. 67). Educational researchers have found that “when teachers are given the time and tools to collaborate they become lifelong learners, their instructional practice improves, and they are ultimately able to increase student achievement for beyond what any of them could accomplish alone” (Carroll, Fulton, & Doerr, 2010, p. 10).

Whereas traditional forms of instructional leadership rely on the principal to facilitate teacher learning, this approach asks teachers to take ownership of their own learning. This approach only works if teacher teams know how to effectively work together, and actually do so consistently. Many of us provide consistent time for our teachers to work together as teams. Yet, we all know that “collaboration does not lead to improved results unless people are focused on the right issues” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010, p. 11), and have the capacity to effectively address those issues.

So let’s return to my first year as a principal. My new vital behavior was to visit and support teacher teams. Initially I left weekly team collaboration meetings somewhat amazed, baffled, and dismayed at my teachers’ obvious frustration and lack of understanding about the processes of working on a team. They just weren’t getting it. They were spending a lot of time on schedules, materials, copies, gossip, and griping. Our district had been using the PLC framework for years, so I assumed that my teachers were intentionally resisting what they knew to be the best practices of teaming. After a few weeks of hand wringing and commiserating with fellow administrators, I met with my team leaders and asked them to tell me what they understood about the why, what, and how of collaboration and PLCs.

One teacher was brave enough to admit,
“Honestly, we don’t really know what we’re supposed to be doing during collaboration time. We believe in the idea. We just don’t know how it’s supposed to work. If you’ll teach us, we’ll do it.” Nods of agreement around the room confirmed to me that while I had foolishly chalked up my teachers’ lack of effective collaboration to their intentional resistance, in reality they simply didn’t know how to effectively collaborate. Overall, my teachers were quite strong instructionally, but had never really been taught the totally new skill set required to collaborate effectively as a team. For the most part, these teachers were willing enough to give it a go. They simply needed support and training. The ball was back in my court. Richard Elmore explains the importance of such reciprocal accountability: “For every increment of performance I demand of you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation” (2004, p. 93). My frustration with my teacher teams was largely my own fault, and if I wanted them to collaborate effectively, I needed to teach them how.

I redoubled my efforts to build team capacity. Initially, my strategy was to provide PLC training during professional development days, hold book study sessions on PLCs, and visit teams during our one-hour collaboration block. As teachers learned more about the whys, whats, and hows of PLCs, they seemed more committed to the process and were collaborating more effectively. While I was pleased with the progress, some teams still were not really getting it. With so many teams, I was not able to visit every team every week, and some teams just didn’t seem to accomplish much of value if I wasn’t sitting right there with them. Substantive, focused, effective collaboration that would support student learning was not happening consistently on each team. We were making some progress, but not enough. I needed another approach that was not so dependent on my attendance at every team meeting every week. This led me to a best approach for building teacher capacity.

A Best Approach: Building Teacher Capacity by Building Team Leader Capacity

My third approach was to build the capacity of my team leaders to facilitate the work of their collaborative teams. Eaker and Keating explain: “Team leaders should be viewed by principals as the key link between administration and faculty” (Eaker & Keating, 2009, p. 52). In this approach principals seek to indirectly improve teacher learning by increasing the capacity of team leaders to lead the PLC process on their collaborative teams (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Best Approach: Principal Building Teacher Capacity by Working Directly with Team Leaders

My focus turned to building the capacity of team leaders outside of their team collaboration meetings.

My third approach was to build the capacity of my team leaders.
DuFour and Marzano explain: “Effective principals will not attempt to do it alone. They will foster shared leadership by identifying and developing educators to lead their collaborative teams” (2011, p. 57). If we have strong team leaders consistently guiding the collaborative process of each team, we don’t need to be at every collaboration meeting every week. We will have a solid cadre of team leaders guiding, directing, and focusing the work.

Gallimore and colleagues explain why having team leaders as the primary guides is actually preferable to having the principal fill that role. “Teams are more effective with peers leading rather than administrators or content experts in the facilitator role for several reasons. Peer-facilitators are uniquely positioned to model ‘a leap of faith,’ frame the work as an investigation, help the group ‘stick with it,’ and guide protocol use as a full participant in the inquiry process” (2009, p. 548).

My initial strategy for building the capacity of my team leaders was to model for them how to lead the PLC process during my visits to collaborative teams. A common team visit consisted of me coming to visit a team, listening for a few minutes, and then taking charge of the process, only to abruptly leave to visit another team. My hope was that these quick visits would help team leaders know how to better run their collaboration meetings. Over time I realized that this approach was ineffective: I was actually exacerbating the very problem I was trying to alleviate. By rudely interrupting team meetings, I was eclipsing and undermining team leaders and making it harder for them to keep team meetings focused on the right work.

My focus turned to building the capacity of team leaders outside of their team collaboration meetings. I realized that I needed to model PLC processes in our team leader meetings. The content of these monthly team leader meetings drastically changed from discussions about schedules and assemblies to discussions about how to lead the PLC process. We set norms, determined essential process standards for our PLC teams, and shared successes and challenges faced by each team. We studied PLC processes together, visited other schools, attended conferences, and supported each other in the work of PLCs. Our progress was accelerated when my team leaders requested that team leader meetings be held weekly rather than monthly. As the capacity of team leaders increased, weekly teacher team meetings improved, which carried over to improved teaching and learning in every classroom.

**A Very Best Approach: Building Teacher Capacity by Combining Approaches**

Each of the three approaches presented here has value and must be a priority. However, the evidence clearly suggests that these approaches are not created equal. Building individual teacher capacity through one-on-one teacher observation and coaching is a good approach. Building the capacity of collaborative teams is an ever better approach. Enhancing and expanding the capacity of team leaders is a best approach.

Clearly, as principals ensure that their team leaders have the capacity to lead learning, collaborative teams, teachers, and students will all learn at higher levels. This means that building the capacity of our leadership teams must be an absolute priority. To accomplish this, we can
Take the time and effort to prepare capacity-building team leader meetings. Place those meetings as a high priority.

Find opportunities to expand vision, knowledge, and motivation of team leaders.

Nothing short of the school burning down should pull us away from team leader meetings. Building the capacity of team leaders is a very high high-yield approach that requires comparatively little time from principals.

Figure 4 Very Best Approach: Principal Building Teacher Capacity by Balancing Work with Teachers, Teams, and Team Leaders

Of course, principals cannot simply focus on team leaders and hope that the rest of the process will just take care of itself. In considering these three approaches, we should be careful to not fall for what Collins and Porras call the “Tyranny of the Or” which suggests that we have to adopt a single strategy or approach at the exclusion of all others. These are not mutually exclusive, competing approaches. “The research shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal” (Harvey & Holland, 2012, p. 3). The very best approach is to embrace the “Genius of the And,” and use the strengths of each of these approaches in concert to build teacher capacity that will ultimately lead to the highest levels of teacher and student learning (Collins & Porras, 2002; Figure 4). As I learned through trial and error, the mutually reinforcing interaction that results by intentionally balancing these approaches can result in the greatest levels of learning.

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Administrators have a difficult job at trying to provide support, trainings, respond to teacher requests, and materials for all of the different classes, students, and needs for their schools. Budgets and funding often prioritize what can be done in the school and classrooms. Administrators and teachers go into the profession to help change the lives of their students. They put in countless extra time and effort to make sure every child is provided with the best instruction, lessons, and learning environment. Although teachers are provided with money for the school year (typically legislation and district level funding), the money is often used on basic needs for the school year. It is professionally motivating to have additional funds for innovation.

Teachers can do many great things in the classroom, but funds provided to schools can limit the options. Having a teacher write, submit, and have the grant funded can accomplish so much for the teacher and students. The teacher will feel proud of the effort they put into the grant and be excited for the outcome. The teacher will be motivated to implement the grant to see the effectiveness for the students learning. Teachers typically need to submit a “Thank You” or summary after the grant and materials have been awarded, which motivates the teacher to use the materials awarded to the most effective ways possible. Teachers will get excited about the students growth and learning and continue to think proactively for the classroom. Teachers will be able to show data of progress for student learning.

If you have teachers that are proactive and innovative thinkers, help them with the process by thinking about a grant. Some of the questions that they should be thinking about before they start the process of writing a grant are:

- What does you classroom and typical day look like?
- What is your school like?
- What is the population of students in your classroom?
- How many students will benefit from the grant?
- What is the need and purpose for what you want to buy?
- What are the goals or outcomes that you expect?
- What items do you want to buy?
- How will you measure the progress?
- What data will you take?
- Are any the hardware or software requests supported by your district?

This is where writing a grant can help a teacher out! The idea of writing a grant can often be intimidating and overwhelm-
ing and just one more thing to do, so teachers often just don’t do it. However, writing a grant is not intimidating and overwhelming. This article will provide teachers with simple guidelines and ideas to move forward with writing a grant and administrators with a response to requests for funds.

**Innovation can be funded and rewarded. Many grants opportunities are available to provide administrators and teachers with extra resources.**

Go to the school districts website and find department that works with district grants. This is often a foundation or grant committee that the district has to provide funding for teachers within the district.

Find the policies and process to complete for your school district.

Identify the need.

Think about and be able to describe what you hope to achieve from receiving the grant.

Start thinking about if this is a small grant, versus a class grant, or even a larger scale grant. **Large scale/school wide grants need to be approved by the Curriculum Department.** Refer to step 1.

Design or find what you want.

Finding the appropriate funding source. There are quite sources; you just need to know where to look (ideas are below).

Make sure that you read and understand the guidelines of each grant source. Most grants specify that the items purchased with the grant money need to stay in the classroom/school. So if you get transferred to a new school or you leave, typically the items stay.

Now….you are ready to write your grant proposal!

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**Grant Sources**

In 2002, Utah’s Credit Unions formed 100% For Kids – Utah Credit Union Education Foundation. This is a fantastic resource for your grants. This organization funds small grants for the classroom, school grants, and major grants. All of the funds donated for this program go straight to teachers. You can find information and start writing a grant with them at [www.100percentforkids.org](http://www.100percentforkids.org).

Donors Choose is another great place for funding a grant. The cool thing about this is that you can have family and friends donate, and it’s tax deductible. Oftentimes, we have family and friends that want to help out, they just don’t know how. This is an easy way for them to help. People from all over can search and donate to any grant they want as well! The website also partners with a lot of different companies that sponsor special times when they match donations dollar for dollar! You can find information and start writing a grant with them at [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org).

Another great place for grants is your own school district! School districts have funding that they give out to teachers every year. Consult with district leaders or department chairs to find out what grants are out there. Districts typically provide numerous opportunities throughout the school year to submit grants.

Grant opportunities can be found at [www.grantwatch.com/cat/42/teachers-grants.html](http://www.grantwatch.com/cat/42/teachers-grants.html).

Rocky Mountain provides grants to the states it services. These can be found at [www.k12grants.org/Grants/rocky_mtn.htm](http://www.k12grants.org/Grants/rocky_mtn.htm).

Another great resource to find more information on writing grants and places to find different grant opportunities is...
Innovation can be funded and rewarded. Many grants opportunities are available to provide administrators and teachers with extra resources. Don’t be intimidated! If there are needs for your students but don’t have resources, take a little time and write a grant! Most of the resources have step by step directions to writing the grant; you just need to think and write J Happy grant writing!!!

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The path I took leading to principalship was not the traditional teach in the classroom for an extended period, and then get the administrative certificate and job. After graduating with a master’s degree and teaching one year in an Ohio public school, I spent the next 13 years coaching basketball at a junior college, a Division I college, and in the NBA.

It was during my seven year NBA stint, coaching and observing some of the greatest athletes in the world, that I asked myself what makes the great ones great. In a world where every participant is considered the best at what they do, what qualities made Larry Bird, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Clyde Drexler, Jason Kid, Buck Williams, Karl Malone, John Stockton, among others, not only stellar players, but the best teammates, the best leaders, and champions? What qualities make these men the best?

Being able to coach these people from very close proximity, I was able to observe the characteristics which made these players the ultimate performers within their profession, and I believe these qualities transfer to the abilities desired in an elite leader of an educational team. The first thing I realized was the talent level between these players and their teammates was not significantly different. They could all shoot, dribble, pass, run, and jump very well. So what sets the elite apart from the rest, and how can we apply this to our professional duties in order for us to become elite educational leaders?

After spending some time observing and pondering the habits, or characteristics each of these players exhibited, I came up with five common traits leading to what I considered the reasons why these men were at the top of their profession. I do believe these qualities are what can make the difference between a good educational leader and a great one.

Each of these players always had clearly defined and discernable goals. One thing I noticed about this attribute was each player did not set more than one or two goals designed for self-improvement, nor did they set an overwhelming number of goals for their team’s performance. Their personal goals all centered on off season improvements they perceived as a weakness, and their team goal was always to simply win a championship. It is very difficult, if not impossible to attain great leadership within our schools if we do not have clear and discernable goals set for our own performance and for the performance of our school as a whole. Take a close look at yourself and find one or two areas you think need to be addressed, and spend the...
better part of the “off season” improving. When setting a goal for your overall school, consider only one goal, and keeping a laser like focus throughout the year. Simply win the championship.

The next quality makes the setting of the improvement goal a success. That is an insatiable desire or drive to succeed and be the best. It is all good and well to set an improvement goal for the off season, but if we do not do everything in our power to work on the goal, we will not make it. After Jason Kid’s rookie season, he set a goal to improve shooting off the dribble. He was at the gym every morning for two hours just shooting off the dribble. This was not enough, so he spent another two hours in the evening. This took place five days a week for the entire off season. Whatever goal you set, you need to be willing to put in the time to make yourself elite.

A willingness and ability to make their teammates better is the next ability shown by these exclusive athletes. This means not just helping on defense, or making the pass for a better shot attempt. It means setting the example for the work attitude necessary to get better and a willingness to help others improve. Michael Jordan was renowned for setting a tone in practice of always working to be the best. If a teammate was not performing at a high level, Michael would make sure they were on the same team, and would will the teammate to compete at a level needed for improvement. As educational leaders, we must seek out the teammates who need our help to improve their performance. We must be willing to make sure they are on our team and we do everything possible to help them become the best.

Furthermore each of these elite athletes had a complete disregard for a fear of failure. Every one of them was willing to take the big shot and willing to take the criticism of attempting and failing. I truly believe nothing great can ever be accomplished if we are so afraid of failing we do not try. Make sure we attack the goals we set with tenacity, and if we encounter setbacks, attack them again and again until we break through.

The final characteristic common with all these elite players is an easily discernable self-confidence. An example of this was when Larry Bird entered the locker room for the three-point contest at an All-star game. He said to all the other competitors, “I can’t believe they are going to pay me all this money to shoot three-point shots; which one of you guys is going to come in second?” He then proceeded to win the shooting contest. When we stand up in front of our staff at the beginning of the year, it is imperative they sense a leader with an easily discernable self-confidence.

Clearly defined goals, a resolute drive to improve, a complete disregard of a fear of failure, a willingness to make others better, and a strong self-confidence are some of the notable characteristics exhibited by the greatest athletic leaders with
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whom I have associated. Check your inventory relative to these attributes and make yourself the elite educational leader your students and staff need and deserve.
If I were to give you the sentence structure with these three simple words “Leadership is ……” how would you respond?

Well?
C’mon…… “Leadership is” what exactly? Your ability to motivate others? Your ability to fix problems? Your ability to share a vision? What specifically is “leadership”?

If you’re anything like me, your brain lit up like Fourth of July fireworks and all types of answers started flowing; “Leadership is setting an example” or “Leadership is doing the right things” or a plethora of ideas and quotes from books or research you’ve done on leadership.

Here’s how Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) defines leadership:

Full Definition of LEADERSHIP
1: the office or position of a leader
2: capacity to lead
3: the act or an instance of leading

With that definition in mind, we all hold a position of leadership (Definition 1) and we all act and have instances of leading daily (Definition 3), but what about our capacity to lead?

This begs the question: What is my capacity to lead? How can I increase my capacity to lead? What specific actions can I take to become a better leader?

Concepts from the military can be compared to the educational arena and used to help principals become better leaders. An Army field manual from 1946, FM 21-20, outlines the physical training program used by soldiers during World War II. Valuable strategies from that manual can be applied to educational leadership.

Let’s explore three concepts that the United States Army explains.

- Essential Leadership Qualities
- Motivation
- Leadership Techniques

It’s incredible that a manual that was written 70 years ago for leaders, in a completely different industry can have so many parallels to us, leaders of our schools in our current times. Excerpts from the manual are quoted and followed by applications for us.

Essential Leadership Qualities
“Possession of Abounding Energy and Enthusiasm”

How much energy are you coming to work with? Are you excited, vibrant and optimistic? Are you doing the things necessary to have those high levels of energy? (Proper sleep, eating right, exercise, etc.)

“The enthusiasm of the leader springs from the realization of the importance of his mission.”

In Granite School District, our charge and responsibility is for students to “leave GSD prepared for col-
lege, career and life in the 21st Century world.” Think about the magnitude of that statement! We’re talking about THOUSANDS of students. What students experience at your school has an impact on their future success…. and thus society’s success. Our mission is critical. (No pressure! J)

“The personal appearance and physical qualifications of the instructor are related to his effectiveness as a leader.”

If a stranger off the street were to walk in your office and shake your hand, what is the impression you would leave that stranger in the first 10 seconds?
What about your teachers?
How we dress speaks volumes without ever saying a word.

Motivation
A successful physical training program requires the full cooperation of all the men. The most successful methods of motivation are indicated below:

“Better Chance to Survive”
While teachers don’t face life and death situations the way our revered soldiers do, we can learn from their training processes. When teachers understand that their efforts in professional development are a personal investment in their teaching career, they’re much more apt to implement those training sessions into their everyday teaching.

“Groups May Compete”
Competition often leads to higher levels of motivation. What opportunities do you offer for your staff or students to compete?

At West Lake we like to use data points from previous quarters and present a competition to our school to beat the previous output. There are hundreds of ways to compete within your own school, such as Tardies Quarter 1 versus Tardies Quarter 2, number of days absent Quarter 1 versus Quarter 2, Suspensions Quarter 1 versus Quarter 2, or Number of F’s Quarter 1 versus Quarter 2. Choose your priority and develop a competition.

“Participating in the Physical Training

“Mastery of subject matter is the first step in developing confidence, assurance and poise.”

As a school instructional leader, you are asked to have an array of knowledge in multiple areas: PLC’s, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Instructional Framework, Common Formative Assessments, Multi-Tiered System of Supports, and more. What steps are you taking to have “Mastery of subject matter”? How are you sharpening your saw?
Staying up to date with education trends and strategies is a key component of your work.

“Understand human nature.”
Imagine giving a written assignment on a Friday afternoon to about 50 people with a deadline of 2 weeks away. You outline the expectations of the assignment and the specific deadline of 3 p.m. – absolutely no later.

Why is it that 5 of 50 people will have it on your desk first thing Monday morning, 10 of the 50 people will have it sporadically dropped off to you within the time frame, 25 people will turn it in at 2:59 p.m. on the Friday due and the other 10/50 people will send you an email on Monday morning following the due date and ask for an extension?

“Tha’t’s human nature folks!”
It’s not always going to be perfect. However, when you know teachers and staff on an individual level, your success rates are going to be much higher.
We know that increasing physical activity increases energy. So, what are you doing during your work day to help stimulate your brain and your body? Try these:

- Brisk walks
- 10 quick push-ups
- 60 seconds of stretches

“Frequent Use of the Men as Assistant Leaders”
How good are you at delegating? Are you making great use of your school leadership team? The more opportunities you give others to succeed, the stronger they become and thus you become.

“Efficiency Testing”
Tests do have power to motivate. When tests align with students’ own personal interests and goals, they can really invigorate a person. Track and field athletes are a simple example of this. Trying to shave off a tenth of a second on a timed run or throwing an object one foot further.

Now that you’ve discovered some motivation techniques from the Field Manual, let’s move to the last section:

Leadership Techniques
Here are excerpts and comparisons from the Leadership Section:

“Commend Good Performance”
There are basically two things that every employee wants in the workforce – autonomy and acknowledgement. When is the last time you paid one of your staff a compliment? Do you take the time to acknowledge your staff with specific feedback? What about opportunities for staff to thank other staff members?

Maybe there are ways you can implement something simple in the beginning of your faculty meetings. We should always strive to commend others for good performance!

“Detailed Outline”
We ask our teachers to use a lesson plan that is detailed. We ask them to showcase exactly what they’re going to teach and how they’re going to teach it with content and language objectives.

A teacher who does not have a prepared lesson plan sticks out like a sore thumb. What about you as an administrator? Do you have a detailed outline of your day? A “to do” list? A schedule for your day?

- We know a proactive plan is always better than a reactive one. If you find yourself overwhelmed or in reactive mode, take the time to write out tasks and goals on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. This will help you get back to your fundamentals.

“Long Explanations Should Be Avoided”
Enough said.

“Employ a Positive Rather than Negative Approach”
Hearing words of praise can be very motivating to students and teachers alike. Be quick to pay a compliment or redirect behavior in a positive manner. You’ll get better results…. and faster too.

“Explain to them the reason”
Imagine this scenario:

Big Tom is a 280 pound nose tackle on the defense and is working on driving his legs and hips through a tackling dummy. He is giving marginal effort and is grumbling under his breath about the stupidity of this drill.

Coach comes and screams: “Tommy! You are terrible! Hit harder!”

- or -
Coach takes 10 seconds to talk with
Tommy and his fellow teammates:
“Tommy! Why do you think we’re doing this drill? You’re facing a 310 pound guard on Friday night and if you don’t have the leg drive to get off the ball…. Well, you’re going to get whoopeed! Now get up there and execute the drill!”

Which scenario is Tommy going to respond better to?

**Conclusion**
The comparison and relevance of guidelines from 70 years ago and from a different organizations is a powerful demonstration of the enduring nature of leadership. Your leadership capacity can grow to higher levels daily. All you have to do is stick with the fundamentals we discussed in this article. Keep your knees straight, your head up and MARCH ON!

**References**
Army Field Manual for Physical Training (194), FM 21-20, physical training

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Imagine that you have just arrived at the dentist with a toothache. The dental assistant invites you to take a seat while you wait for the dentist. An anesthetic is administered. After a few moments, your dentist appears and carefully begins to perform an extraction. Several staff members and other dentists who have come to confirm that the procedure is performed properly. After a time, the dentists consult with one another and conclude that everything was done correctly and with precision. You are discharged, but wait—your toothache hasn’t improved. You are in just as much pain as before. Your dentist performed what appeared to be a perfectly executed extraction…only on the wrong tooth. This situation could have been avoided had anyone bothered to consult with the patient.

So it is oftentimes in our efforts to improve teaching. Principals and instructional coaches help teachers to plan lessons and then observe the teachers’ efforts to implement the plans. While they watch very carefully to determine that teachers execute a perfectly planned lesson, few will ask the students if the lesson hit its mark. It’s as if the act of teaching is more important than the teaching’s effects on students and their learning. Or perhaps, it’s just too difficult to make a judgment as to effect. Most lessons will work for some students, while other students in the same classroom will remain unaffected, enjoying none of the benefits of the instruction. If only the teaching is observed, and not its effects on student learning, improper judgments will be made about the adequacy of instruction across all the students in the class. Some would argue that most principals acting as instructional leaders are astute enough to note the evidences of student disengagement during a lesson, and therefore, their observations are sufficient and adequate. It is also true, however, that students may appear to understand what is going on when they are really hoping that their lack of...
understanding will continue unnoticed, drawing no attention to them whatsoever. It may be easier to identify students on either end of the spectrum of learning than those students who are in the middle, getting by some or most of the time, but spending significant amounts of time wondering how to be successful. Recent national reports reveal that this “middle” group is becoming larger and increasingly less successful, slipping “quietly” into the lowest performing group. And yet, if the teacher knew at the time that students were confused, instruction could be adjusted to address the source of the confusion. In reality, students are the best experts in judging the adequacy of their instruction, and they are rarely consulted in the process of instructional evaluation.

Many students struggle to learn because classrooms and schools are ill prepared to accommodate the increasing diversity in student abilities and needs. According to a recent article in the Washington Post (January, 16, 2015), “The explosion in the number of needy children in the nation’s public classrooms is a recent phenomenon that has been gaining attention among educators, public officials and researchers . . . The shift to a majority-poor student population means that in public schools, a growing number of children start kindergarten already trailing their more privileged peers and rarely, if ever, catch up. . . . Education policy, funding decisions and classroom instruction must adapt to the needy children who arrive at school each day.” The following facts and statistics underscore the realities found in our public schools:

- The majority of these students now come from circumstances of poverty (Washington Post, Jan. 16, 2015; Southern Education Foundation, May 2015)
- Only 35% of eighth-grade students are proficient in math and only 36% are proficient in reading (similar proficiency rates are found at other age/grade levels)
- Eighth-grade math proficiency is 45% for white students, but only 14% for black and 21% for Hispanic students.
- Reading proficiency for eighth-graders is similar: White, 46%; Black, 17%; Hispanic, 22% (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2013)
- Compared to the proficiency levels of students from 34 other countries, American students ranked 27th in math, 17th in reading, and 20th in science (PISA, Program for International Student Assessment, 2012)

The US spends more on education than do other countries (per student expenditures), but that increased spending does not translate into higher achievement.

Faced with rising levels of poverty that place ever greater stress on American schools, and evidence that current educational practice in America is unable to reverse the trends toward lower academic achievement and higher acting out and disruptive behavior, educational policymakers have employed a variety of “turnaround” and reform initiatives, including restructuring, leadership changes, school grading, and financial incentives, and merit pay.

Considered individually or taken together, these so-called solutions amount to a fresh coat of paint on an otherwise dilapidated infrastructure. None of these initiatives has borne fruit, and the problem of sinking achievement and failing
schools and students continues to afflict American education. Nevertheless, school officials continue to administer annual high stakes tests in the hope that doing so will motivate either students or teachers to improve the scores. Even if these “autopsy” data were precise enough to inform instruction, the tests come only after the student has already passed on to the next grade, class, or teacher. Instructional coaches and building principals observe and document teaching practices in the hope that occasional audits of performance will result in widespread and sustained changes in instruction. Unfortunately, these “expert” observers actually know very little about what truly effective educational practice or quality instruction looks like. The most “expert” critic of instruction, the student, is almost never consulted in the process of auditing daily instructional practice. If they are consulted at all, students are typically asked only about their attitudes toward their teachers. They are rarely asked about the presence or absence of specific instructional activities and events that are known to produce learning.

American education needs a dramatically different approach to school reform and improvement, one that employs innovative methodologies that bring day-to-day reports of instructional practice from the consumers of those practices directly to the teachers whose behavior in the classroom must change to meet the needs of less prepared and more challenged students. A fundamental shift is required in our approach, one that documents the nature and substance of the interaction between teacher and student, and provides timely information to teachers, in a formative process, so that teachers can adjust instruction and target efforts to those who need more and better teaching. Truthfully, until the students notice the difference in our classrooms and schools, nothing has changed. We can’t afford to continue to lose instructional opportunities to increased absenteeism (often the result of unresponsive instruction and poor teacher-student relationships), misbehavior (documented result of misaligned instruction), or careless, unfocused, and untargeted instructional interventions.

Researchers at the Center for the School of the Future at Utah State University and TetraAnalytx have studied more than 3,000 schools in fourteen US states and three foreign countries over the past 15 years. We have isolated more than 50 variables of interest within those schools and the neighborhoods in which they are located. We have compared the data on these variables to standardized measures of academic achievement. Applying rigorous scientific standards in this investigation has revealed relationships among variables stronger than have been found heretofore in educational research. Correlational values approaching .80 are rarely encountered in educational or social science research (Winner & Hettel, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2001), but they are common in our research (Janzen, 2013; Moore, 2007). Our investigation has led us to some very interesting conclusions, some of which confirm what others have said about schools and achievement. For instance, Family and neighborhood economic
and social conditions matter. Students in schools in affluent neighborhoods and from stable, supportive families tend to achieve better.

Teacher characteristics matter. Better-trained teachers often have students who score better on standardized tests, although there seem to be other factors that contribute.

But, our most important finding to date is that what teachers do everyday in the classroom, in response to specific student needs and requirements, matters most, and often can overcome the effects of variables that schools and teachers have no control over, such as social and economic factors. In fact, if teachers create four “conditions for learning” in their classrooms, conditions recognized and acknowledged by their students, the students will learn in spite of many other competing variables and obstacles.

Taken together, these four variables account for 67% of the variance of academic achievement: four times more than community risk variables (socioeconomics), five times more than parent support, 15 times more than teacher qualifications, 37 times more than school leadership, and 60 times more than school fiscal and programmatic resources (Janzen, 2013; Smith, Taylor, & West, 2004; Taylor, West, Charlton, & Smith, 2015; West, Smith, & Taylor, 2004). In a study of 100 Utah schools, these four conditions were found to predict end-of-year scores on a standardized language arts test better than the DIBELS test predicted these scores, and the predictive relationship was even stronger when the contribution of socioeconomic variables was removed (Janzen, 2013). Thus, these conditions, completely under the control of teachers and schools are far more important in predicting academic success than are poverty, and various family and neighborhood variables thought previously to be impossible to overcome. Frankly, if you create the following “conditions for learning” for every student every day, students are guaranteed to learn.

**Clear Expectations for Performance.** Successful students require the condition of a clear understanding of high expectations for academic and behavioral performance in each subject and in each setting. Clearly communicating high expectations for performance is the first step in effective teaching. It explains the reward contingencies for acceptable behavior and clearly describes the steps to the reward. Using common language in these expectations throughout the school results in a common understanding of expectations, which leads to common success, a condition that in today’s schools and society is not common at all. Consider the following questions as you reflect on the clarity of expectations in your classroom or school.

Do all of my students understand what is expected of them in the classroom and what are the evidences of that understanding?

Do any of my students experience frustration or confusion during instruction? If so, have they learned strategies to prevent these experiences from being discouraging?

**Fundamental Skills Performed with Fluency.** Effective learning requires the presence of fundamental skills that give the student hope that high expectations can be achieved. The presence of funda-
mental skills is most likely when students are provided sufficient support and a multitude of opportunities for practice. The gap between current knowledge and abilities and the expectations for future performance has to be as Goldilocks said, “just right”; not too great, which results in discouragement and despair, nor too small, which results in boredom and disinterest. Thus, this gap is different for each student, and only the student knows if the “just right” principle has been met. Capable students who are actively involved in challenging instruction rarely engage in disruptive behavior. Careful attention should be given to strategies that provide many response opportunities in the teaching of academic skills, social skills, and self-management skills. Consider the following questions.

- Do all of my students have sufficient opportunities to practice essential skills with the required fluency to meet current academic standards?
- Do I have curriculum-based student performance data reflecting consistent growth for all students, at least weekly?
- What evidence do I have that appropriate, relevant instruction is available for all of my students at their current performance level?

**Recognition for Efforts to Meet Expectations.** To keep learners engaged in learning, there must be likelihood that efforts to meet the high expectations will be recognized and rewarded. Teachers must acknowledge and recognize appropriate behavior and individual efforts to improve whenever and wherever they occur throughout the school environment. The most effective recognitions will be timely and descriptive, will include a specific rationale or explanation of why the behavior is useful or valuable, and will have an enduring quality that will serve as the context for future performance, such as a praise note that can be posted and used as evidence of expectations for future performance. Consider the following questions.

- Do all of my students feel recognized for their best efforts?
- Do I have evidence that I have recognized the best efforts of every student in my class, every day?

**Relationships of Trust.** Successful students report the presence of at least one adult in their school environment whom they trust to provide help and support, if needed. Establishing and maintaining staff-to-student relationships based upon mutual respect and positive regard heightens a student’s motivation to excel and provides a firm foundation for teaching, especially the teaching of difficult skills and complicated concepts. These relationships provide a context for support to the student who may feel overwhelmed when recognizing the size of the gulf between current and expected performance.

- Do all of my students report having trust in at least one adult at school?
- Do my students readily approach me to ask for help solving academic or social problems?
- How will I know if my students feel safe to make mistakes in my classroom?

Unfortunately, these conditions are far less likely to be found in classrooms and schools than many teachers believe. Teachers and school personnel will readily accept these four conditions as important, but they will mistakenly acknowledge that they exist in their
classrooms, even before they assess the conditions from the perspective of their students. Schools where as many as 80% of the students report the presence of at least three of the four conditions are eight to ten times more likely to have academic achievement at the highest level, but these schools represent only a small minority of schools. In a study of 103 elementary schools and 46 secondary schools, only a very small percentage had as many as 80% of students reporting even three of the four conditions:

- 2% of elementary schools provided at least three of the four conditions for academic success for at least 80% of their students (mean percentage of students reporting ALL conditions: ES, 49.73%)
- 8% of elementary schools provided at least three of the four conditions for interpersonal success for at least 80% of their students
- 0% of secondary schools provided at least three of the four conditions for academic success for at least 80% of their students (mean percentage of students reporting ALL conditions: HS, 39.75%; MS/JrHS, 42.55%)
- 2% of secondary schools provided at least three of the four conditions for interpersonal success for at least 80% of their students

Clearly, there is a great deal of room for improvement in creating these conditions and realizing the associated benefits in higher levels of academic achievement and improved student relationships and behavior.

As practical evidence of the impact of the power of assessing and creating the “conditions for learning”, we offer the following case studies. Each of these schools was led by a leadership team focused on creating the conditions for teaching and learning. We urge your consideration of them, and encourage you to contact those involved for further insights. In our opinion, choosing to ignore the “conditions for learning” will result in schools that are no better today than they were yesterday, a discouraging reality for the students languishing in unproductive classrooms.

**Granger High School (2009-2013).** Under the leadership of Principal Jerry Haslam and an administrative team consisting of Rob Wessman, Ryan Oaks, and David Gatti, and over a period of four years, students at Granger High School experienced consistent improvement in the conditions for learning. The leadership team and the school faculty worked tirelessly and intentionally to provide these four conditions for every student, every day. Their efforts translated into an immediate improvement in the school environment resulting in decreases in reductions in suspension and expulsion, disruptive behavior, safe school violations, office disciplinary referrals, and fights.

The number of students suspended from school dropped 60%:
- The number of class periods missed dropped 70%;
- The number of fights dropped 88%.

In this school where poverty rates approached 60%, six out of 10 students spoke a language other than English at home, and 41 different languages were spoken by the students, Granger High School achieved “adequate yearly progress” for the first time in its history and displayed overall academic performance exceeding high schools in the district from higher socioeconomic circumstances. Graduation rates also improved by a dramatic 16%.
Greenwood Elementary School (2011-2012). Principal Jason Benson led his faculty and community in a systematic effort to improve the conditions for learning at Greenwood Elementary School. He was an early-career principal, given a challenge to oversee an effort to reform an under-performing Title I school. Within one year of focusing on improving the conditions, Greenwood Elementary achieved “adequate yearly progress.” As a result of focusing on creating and sustaining these conditions for students who reported from 0 to 2 of the conditions, the number of chronically absent students decreased by 50%; teachers reported significant reductions in behavior problems, and teachers and staff members reported greater collaboration and improvements in morale. Greenwood Elementary was recognized as a “reward” school as a result of significant improvements in academic performance.

Rich Middle School. Kip Motta, principal, has focused on the critically-important conditions for learning for several years. At the beginning of his quest to improve the conditions, 74% of the sixth-graders at Rich Middle School scored “proficient” on Utah’s language arts CRT, a number below the expectation for middle schools serving a similar population of students. After two years of consistent and intentional efforts to improve the conditions for learning, 97% of this cohort of students, now in the eighth grade, scored “proficient” on the state’s language arts CRT. This pass rate was the highest in the entire state for any age group. Years after the initial effort to improve the conditions for learning, the majority of students at Rich Middle School continue to report the presence of the conditions for learning, and the school continues to achieve the highest levels of academic performance.

Almost any teacher can be successful with certain students. Some students seem almost to teach themselves. But the opposite is also true. Some students present such dramatic challenges that very few teachers feel equipped to help them achieve success. Poverty, home language, neighborhood disruptions and mobility, and other factors beyond the control of teachers and schools spell disaster for many students. Nevertheless, teachers care about the success of their students and desire that each one becomes a productive learner in spite of the obstacles to success. Effective teachers ensure that all students recognize and enjoy these conditions by tirelessly working until all students report the presence of these conditions. They accept that when one or more of the conditions is missing from the experience of their students, little else matters. Success is not defined by who looks like an effective teacher, but by how teachers work side-by-side with students to craft learning environments and experiences that provide the conditions for learning.

References


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